
THE GOLDFINCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DAVIESS COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2003

MEETINGS EACH 2ND MONDAY SEPTEMBER THRU JUNE

AT FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH 7TH & J.R. MILLER BOULEVARD

Kentucky's Reptiles and Amphibians

Our program February 10 will be presented by Tim Sloan who is the Biodiversity Director for the Kentucky Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation. Sloan will discuss the effects upon Kentucky's reptiles and amphibians from the pet trade, and habitat degradation caused by pesticides, herbicides, and *development*. Reptiles and amphibians are considered to be indicator species because their skin, the body's largest organ, is immersed in any pollutants present in their environment. So a threat to this group is a threat to the Great Blue Heron, for example, that has no choice in its dining selection and so on up the food chain. We need to heed the signals we're being sent by indicator species in order to make good decisions about undoing past damage to our planet and for going forward with trying to avoid doing more harm in the future.

Kudos to Cravens

For the past two years, since we first met the smiling faces of the Explorers Club, we have been extremely proud of Ms. Lawana Hodskins and her Cravens Elementary students as they garner awards and accolades for their academic achievements and projects. Several of our members have been delivering used Kroger bags, aluminum soda cans, and empty printer cartridges to the students for their fund raising recycling projects. Our club is a fan club of these young environmentalists.

The students have recently been recognized for a gardening project in their outdoor classroom. Our chapter sponsors Ms. Hodskins' Explorers Club with a kit of Audubon Adventures which is concentrating on the 4 different climatic divisions in North America.

<http://audubon.wku.edu/daviess/audubon.html>

PEABODY WMA TRIP REPORT

For February 1 the weather was above average, but it was not a day at the beach. Our 8 hardy birders were given a guided tour to parts of the Wildlife Management Area where we'd never ventured before. One highlight of the trip was the Short-eared Owl that flew in a circle less than 15 feet above our vehicles and perched near us facing the setting sun where illumination was marvelous. Another was the Osprey nest built atop a utility line's crossbar. The largest number of birds in one sighting was a flock of 30 wild turkeys in the roadway and nearby pines. We found an area near Ken Lake with great beauty where large white pines grow atop a neck of land edged with beautiful clear lakes on each side. A busy beaver has gone into high gear along the edge of one lake. Eastern Kentucky University's trapping of Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls was underway by Mark Monroe who will be our program presenter in May. The Masters' research underway was using mice to attract the owls and harriers with loops of wire set to snare them for the grad students.

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Fair or Foul? PETA Says Fowl are Fouled by KFC. Is KFC Kosher?

A boycott of Kentucky Fried Chicken, KFC, was launched by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, at KFC's corporate headquarters in Louisville the second week of January. Approximately 1000 demonstrations are expected to take place at KFC restaurants worldwide in the next 6 months. PETA has been successful in forcing fast food franchises such as McDonalds and Burger King to require improved treatment of animals from the suppliers of their meat products.

PETA is dubbing the object of their protest as *Kentucky Fried Cruelty*. PETA sees the factory farms producing the young chickens purchased by KFC as crowded and inhumane. The methods of transport and slaughter are also frowned upon by the animal rights organization. KFC denies its participation in, or support of, any cruel treatment of animals.

It appears that many Kentuckians eschew poultry houses more for their polluting nature and their mistreatment of employees than for their treatment of the chickens. It is likely that this campaign will expand people's disfavor toward the food production methods going on all over our state.

As birders and consumers, we need to address the issue in our individual and collective conscience(s). There was a time in our region when it did not matter what was done to slaves and, in different ways, to women. Likewise there were few protections for minors of all races in a society starved for cheap or free labor.

The times they are a changin' and the change to factory farms is an event that came about solely for profit, spurred by greed and no other reason. Because the product is only seen looking pretty and pink under cellophane

wap atop white Styrofoam or under the golden brown coating of breading with secret herbs and spices, the consumer is shielded from the ugly side of the business. If a change is to occur, the consumer will wield the power of the pocketbook. However, the consumer will also pay the higher cost if or when improvements are made. PETA's call for ending crowded conditions, stopping the starving for greater egg production, ending the practice of debeaking, transporting without exposure to the elements and the terror of highways, and killing with gas instead of decapitation of birds dangling from an overhead assembly line will increase the cost to the consumer.

If it matters to you whether or not birds classified as poultry have feelings, then you might be interested in Karen Davis' new book, *The Turkey: More Than a Meal*. Davis describes the relationship between the turkey hen and her young as beginning well before hatching. Her vocalizations are answered by peeps from each of the unhatched birds a full week before they emerge from their shells. The hen knows each of her brood by smell and sound. She will defend them vigorously and they remain with her for protection and learning the turkey ropes until they reach adulthood. Knowing this intensity of bonding makes the factory production of turkeys even more repugnant to people who care about the feelings of the animals we eat.

Where do you stand? Is cheap food your principal interest? Kosher standards require that any animal be treated humanely during its life and at the time of its slaughter. So if KFC buys chicken from factory farms, PETA might just be right, they aren't at all Kosher. Does the consumer carry this onus with KFC?

February Calendar of Events

Monday February 10th

7 PM Monthly meeting at First Christian Church

Sunday February 16th

Community College Count Meet in the parking lot across from Deer Park Elementary at **2 PM**

Friday, Saturday & Sunday
February 14-17

The Great Backyard Bird Count for more information
birdsource.cornell.edu/gbbc/

Saturday February 22nd

Nest box clean-up and repair at Joe Ford Nature Center **9 AM**

Saturday February 22nd

Southern Indiana University's annual maintenance meeting for its Eastern Bluebird Trail nest boxes **9 AM to 11 AM.**

Monday February 24th

Directors' Meeting **7 PM** at the Joe Ford Center



Nest Boxes Call for Spring Fix-up

One of the on-going aspects of the nest box project that our chapter started along the GreenBelt Park several years ago is a clean-out and repair of weather damage and vandalism each year before the March mating season begins. Another need is relocating a few boxes that our volunteers have reported as being inaccessible for monitoring. Two or three of the older boxes on the west end of the trail between Parrish Avenue and Joe Ford Nature Park are in need of either repairs or replacement.

Bring your toolbox and some nails and screws to the Joe Ford Nature Center on Saturday morning, February 22nd if you are interested in joining the cleanup and fix up effort. If the weather is bad, we'll work indoors with the plan of waiting for a sunny day to replace the repaired boxes out along the walking trail.

Some of our members have made it an annual spring event to attend the Bluebird nest box clean-up and fix-up with Dr. Chuck Price at Southern Indiana University. That group will meet at the log cabin on the campus at 9 AM for coffee and doughnuts before getting their group assignments of part of the campus trail. After lunch at a nearby pig-out place, the group usually uses the weather conditions du jour to decide about stopping at other Evansville area birding sites before returning to Owensboro. If anyone is interested in going to S.I.U., contact Bill Little at (270) 298-4237 or xlavian@starband.net.

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